

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1.           A computer system comprising:  
              a uniform interface configured to receive a generalized request from a report object and, based upon information included in the generalized request, access data from a general ledger database and return the accessed data to the report object,  
              wherein at least one staging table, having a standardized structure which is independent of a structure of the general ledger database, is utilized by the uniform interface to store at least a portion of the accessed data.
2.           The computer system of claim 1 wherein the uniform interface is further configured to access the data from the general ledger database by translating the generalized request into a specific query which, upon execution, populates the at least one staging table with the accessed data.
3.           The computer system of claim 2 wherein the uniform interface is further configured to query the at least one staging table to retrieve the accessed data and to return the accessed data to the report object after execution of the specific query that populates the at least one staging table.

4. The computer system of claim 1 wherein the at least one staging table is an account code table.

5. The computer system of claim 1 wherein the at least one staging table is an account balance staging table.

6. The computer system of claim 1 wherein the at least one staging table is a column filter staging table.

7. The computer system of claim 1 wherein the generalized request includes at least one natural account, and wherein the at least one natural account is translated into at least one account code, which is stored in an account balance staging table, with the help of the uniform interface.

8. The computer system of claim 7 wherein the specific query, into which the generalized request is translated by the uniform interface, comprises a single sequential query language (SQL) statement that joins the account staging table with a balance table of the general ledger database, such that balance information for an entire report column can be retrieved by execution of the single SQL statement.

9. The computer system of claim 8 wherein the balance information comprises current balance amounts for each account code in the account staging table.

10. The computer system of claim 8 wherein the balance information comprises year-to-date balance amounts for each account code in the account staging table.

11. The computer system of claim 8 wherein the generalized request further comprises account filter criteria, and wherein a WHERE clause of the single SQL statement is configured to include the account filter criteria.

12. The computer system of claim 1 wherein the generalized request includes at least one natural account and account filter criteria, and wherein, with the help of the uniform interface, the at least one natural account is translated into at least one account code, which is stored in an account balance staging table, and wherein account codes that match the account filter criteria are stored in a column-filter staging table.

13. The computer system of claim 12 wherein the specific query, into which the generalized request is translated by the uniform interface, comprises a single sequential query language (SQL) statement that joins the account staging table with the column-

filter staging table and with a balance table of the general ledger database, such that balance information for an entire report column can be retrieved by execution of the single SQL statement.

14. The computer system of claim 13 wherein the balance information comprises current balance amounts for each account code in the account staging table.

15. The computer system of claim 13 wherein the balance information comprises year-to-date balance amounts for each account code in the account staging table.

16. The computer system of claim 1 wherein the at least one staging table is a temporary table.

17. The computer system of claim 1 wherein the at least one staging table is a permanent table.

18. A computer implemented method of retrieving data, from a general ledger database, to satisfy a generalized request from a report object, comprising:

receiving the generalized request from the report object; and

accessing, based upon information included in the generalized request, data from the general ledger database and returning the accessed data to the report object,

wherein at least one staging table, having a standardized structure which is independent of a structure of the general ledger database, is utilized to store at least a portion of the accessed data.

19. The method of claim 18 wherein the accessing step further comprises translating the generalized request into a specific query which, upon execution, populates the at least one staging table with the accessed data.

20. The method of claim 18 wherein the at least one table is a temporary table.